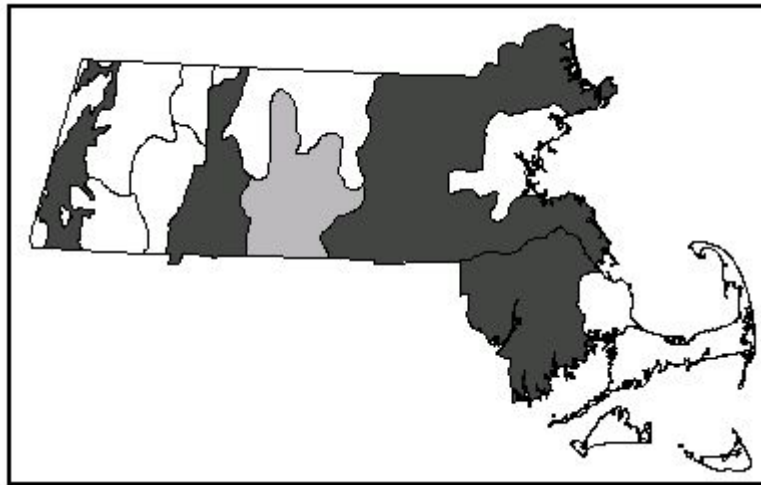


**Community Name:** SMALL-RIVER FLOODPLAIN FOREST  
**Community ELCODE:** CP1A2B3000  
**SRANK:** S2



**Concept:** Silver maple/green ash-dominated forests occurring on alluvial soils of small rivers and streams.

**Environmental setting:** Small-river floodplain forests are known to occur on third-order or smaller tributaries of the Connecticut and Nashua Rivers, on small rivers of eastern Massachusetts where banks are low and overbank flooding occurs, such as the Ipswich, Assabet, Concord, Shawsheen, and Three Mile Rivers, and on edges of riverine islands of the Merrimack River. Annual flooding occurs, but the water volume and degree of scour are much less than in major-river floodplain forests. Soils are hydric silt loams and fine sandy loams with soil mottling within the top 60 cm [2 ft.] and sometimes with a surface organic layer.

**Vegetation Description:** As in major-river and transitional floodplain forest types, silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) is dominant in the overstory of small-river floodplain forests, but the understory more closely resembles that of red maple-alluvial swamp forests. Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) are both typically absent in the canopy of small-river floodplain forest communities. Pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) is a common canopy associate in the Connecticut River basin, and river birch (*Betula nigra*) in the Merrimack River basin. Small-river floodplain forests have a more substantial shrub layer than both major-river and transitional types, but less than alluvial swamp forests. The shrub layer consists mainly of silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*) and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). There is greater herbaceous plant diversity in small-river floodplain forests than in major-river and transitional types. Sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) and false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*) are most common, and associates include the moisture-loving plants, water hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*), swamp candles (*Lysimachia terrestris*), and water parsnip (*Sium suave*).

**Associations:** One association was described in Kearsley (1998): Type IV-Small-river floodplain forests (*Acer saccharinum*-*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*-*Quercus palustris* Association).

**Habitat values for Associated Fauna:** Small-river floodplain forests often contain meander scars or backwater sloughs that function as vernal pools and provide important amphibian breeding habitat.

**Associated rare plants:**

ARISAEMA DRACONTIUM	GREEN DRAGON	T
BETULA NIGRA	RIVER BIRCH	- WL
CAREX GRAYI	GRAY'S SEDGE	T
CAREX TYPHINA	CAT-TAIL SEDGE	T
CLAYTONIA VIRGINICA	NARROW-LEAVED SPRING BEAUTY	T
MENISPERMUM CANADENSE	MOONSEED	- WL
MIMULUS ALATUS	WINGED MONKEY-FLOWER	E
RUMEX VERTICILLATUS	SWAMP DOCK	T

From: Swain, P.C. & J.B. Kearsley. 2001. Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Version 1.3. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. Westborough, MA.

# Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

## Associated rare animals:

AMBYSTOMA JEFFERSONIANUM	JEFFERSON SALAMANDER	SC
AMBYSTOMA LATERALE	BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER	SC
CINCINNATIA WINKLEYI	NEW ENGLAND SILTSNAIL	SC
CLEMMYS GUTTATA	SPOTTED TURTLE	SC
CLEMMYS INSCULPTA	WOOD TURTLE	SC
EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII	BLANDING'S TURTLE	T
GOMPHUS FRATERNUS	MIDLAND CLUBTAIL	E
GOMPHUS VASTUS	COBRA CLUBTAIL	SC
GOMPHUS VENTRICOSUS	SKILLET CLUBTAIL	SC
HEMIDACTYLUM SCUTATUM	FOUR-TOED SALAMANDER	SC
NEUROCORDULIA OBSOLETA	UMBER SHADOWDRAGON	SC
OPHIOGOMPHUS ASPERSUS	BROOK SNAKETAIL	SC
OPHIOGOMPHUS CAROLUS	RIFFLE SNAKETAIL	T
SOMATOCHLORA CINGULATA	LAKE EMERALD	SC
SOMATOCHLORA ELONGATA	SKI-TAILED EMERALD	SC
SOMATOCHLORA GEORGIANA	COPPERY EMERALD	E
SOMATOCHLORA GEORGIANA	COPPERY EMERALD	E
SOMATOCHLORA KENNEDYI	KENNEDY'S EMERALD	E
SOMATOCHLORA LINEARIS	MOCHA EMERALD	SC
STYLURUS AMNICOLA	RIVERINE CLUBTAIL	E
STYLURUS SCUDDERI	ZEBRA CLUBTAIL	E
STYLURUS SPINICEPS	A CLUBTAIL DRAGONFLY	T

## Examples with Public Access:

small tributaries of the Connecticut River, South Hadley.

## Threats:

The non-native plant species, moneywort (*Lysimachia nummularia*), forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), and glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), are most prevalent in small-river and transitional floodplain forest types, especially in disturbed areas.

## Management needs:

Removal of non-native plants is needed, especially in areas where they are competing with state-protected rare species.

## Synonyms

### USNVC/TNC:

Similar to *Quercus palustris*-*Acer rubrum*/*Carex grayi*-*Geum canadense* forest [CEGL006185] and to *Acer saccharinum*/*Boehmeria cylindrica* forest [CEGL006176].

### MA [old name]:

Southern New England floodplain forest [CT2B1A0000].

### ME:

Hardwood floodplain forest community.

### VT:

Silver maple-sensitive fern-false nettle riverine floodplain forest.

### NH:

Silver maple/false nettle-wood reed-sedge floodplain forest.

### NY:

Floodplain forest.

### CT:

*Acer saccharinum*/*Boehmeria cylindrica* community; *Quercus palustris*-*Fraxinus pennsylvanica* forests.

### RI:

Similar to both the Maple-sycamore floodplain forest and the Red maple-pin oak floodplain forest.

### Golet & Larson, 1974:

Deciduous wooded swamp (WS-1).

## Author:

J. Kearsley

## Date:

7/21/99